

VZCZCXRO3678
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHMD #0864/01 2181229
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 051229Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5204
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 0252
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 4016
RUEHBP/AMEMBASSY BAMAKO 0046
RUEHJL/AMEMBASSY BANJUL 0050
RUEHRY/AMEMBASSY CONAKRY 0060
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0149
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 0017
RUEHLU/AMEMBASSY LUANDA 0046
RUEHTO/AMEMBASSY MAPUTO 0180
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0104
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NIAMEY 0136
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 1168
RUEHPA/AMEMBASSY PRAIA
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 6113
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 0563
RUEHWD/AMEMBASSY WINDHOEK 0046
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA 3532

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 MADRID 000864

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/04/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPANISH GOVERNMENT COMMITTED TO AFRICA, BUT
COHESION AND BUDGET PRESENT OBSTACLES

MADRID 00000864 001.2 OF 004

Classified By: Acting DCM Dan Keller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Spanish government's push for stronger ties with sub-Saharan Africa in recent years, although driven largely by an underlying focus on security, appears to have opened a new front in Spanish foreign policy likely to endure at least for the near to medium term, judging from recent conversations with GOS officials and think tank analysts. From President Zapatero on down, Spanish officials this summer have said they remain committed to government efforts in Africa, although privately some officials admit that Spain's current economic problems could make some of their initiatives difficult to achieve. Moreover, GOS policy toward sub-Saharan Africa will probably continue to focus on West and North Africa--the source of Spain's top concerns stemming from illegal immigration, narcotrafficking, organized crime, and terrorism--and sometimes suffers from a lack of cohesion and implementation. Nonetheless, the Zapatero government appears interested in U.S. initiatives like AFRICOM and the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. There are areas in which Madrid could help further U.S. objectives in Africa--although, as with many issues, the GOS may shy away from public cooperation. END SUMMARY

//ON THE DIPLOMATIC AND DEVELOPMENT FRONT//

12. (SBU) Spanish MFA officials tell us that under the Spanish government's much touted Plan Africa (originally outlined for 2006-08, but which we understand is being extended through 2012), Spain has opened new embassies in Cape Verde, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, and Sudan, although it is unclear whether all are fully up and running. Spain has also opened new AECI offices (USAID-equivalent) in Cape Verde and Guinea. The MFA in June elevated sub-Saharan Africa to an independent Directorate General (previously it been under a DG that also handled North Africa and the Middle East), naming Maria del Carmen de la Pena to the post. She served previously as resident ambassador in Ethiopia (2004-08) and as a past sub-DG for sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, Spanish

officials point to a dramatic increase in development aid flowing to the region.

13. (SBU) Antonio Sanchez-Benedito, Subdirector General for sub-Saharan Africa at the MFA, in early July told poloff that under current GOS efforts, Spanish contributions to Africa have risen from 1.5 million euros in 2003 to 1 billion euros for 2008. Some of these new funds have allowed Spain to boost cooperation with Portugal in Africa, drawing on the idea of an Iberian connection with countries like Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Mozambique, and Angola, according to researchers looking at Spain-Africa relations at the Madrid think tank Foundation for International Relations and Exterior Dialogue (FRIDE). They say that Madrid's commitment was evident through its heavy involvement in the 2007 EU-Africa summit in Lisbon during Portugal's EU presidency. We note that FRIDE was founded by Diego Hidalgo, a philanthropist, businessman and former World Bank official often described as the "George Soros of Spain."

14. (C) Spain's policy focus in sub-Saharan Africa, however, remains heavily West Africa-centric. President Zapatero and Foreign Minister Moratinos have publicly stated their commitment to host a "summit" between Spain and West African countries to address common issues such as immigration. Deputy Foreign Minister Angel Lossada in late July toured several West African countries, including Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal (results of the trip to be reported SEPTTEL). Although Spain is working in other parts of the subcontinent and has hosted separate visits by the South African Defense and Foreign ministers in the past two years and included South Africa as well as Angola, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, and Namibia among its "priority" countries

MADRID 00000864 002.2 OF 004

in Plan Africa, its efforts in West Africa have been scattershot until now.

15. (C) Spanish foreign policy toward Africa has been underdeveloped and sometimes poorly coordinated, with officials often making ambitious policy declarations that lack organizational support or substantive backing. For example, just days after Moratinos' statements about Spain hosting a West African summit, Antonio Sanchez-Benedito (Subdirector General for sub-Saharan Africa) was still non-committal. Hedging his bets, he told poloff that this would not necessarily be a formal meeting, but rather continued and extensive communication. Spain has not committed to a summit, he said, but instead is interested in strengthening its partnership with West African countries. Lossada, however, during his 22 July visit in Senegal, once again reaffirmed Zapatero's intention to convene a West African summit in upcoming months, and our latest information indicates that President Wade of Senegal will assist with summit preparations, along with officials from Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Guinea-Conakry.

16. (C) FRIDE researchers cite numerous other areas where the GOS will have to improve its efforts if it wants to be taken seriously. They say for example that the MFA and AECI lack sufficient field experience and knowledge of development issues; that there has been too much bureaucratic infighting, both within MFA units and between the MFA and AECI; that there is a large disconnect between the policy and implementation components of AECI; and that Spain too often uses development assistance as a political lever rather than as a means of promoting long-term change. These researchers decry a lack of cooperation among ministries and claim there was no real attempt to coordinate the military, diplomatic, and development components of its efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (where Spain deployed 130 troops as part of an EU mission in 2006 and now maintains a pair of military observers in the UN mission). They also assert that Spain largely lacks an analytic capacity to evaluate the success or failure of its existing programs. Moreover, future Spanish engagement with Africa could be predicated at

least partly on economic conditions in Spain. Zapatero in early July pledged that Spain would maintain its commitment to Africa and promised that, regardless of Spain's economic situation, the GOS would continue progress toward its goal of committing an amount equivalent to 0.7 percent of GDP on total development aid (including to other regions) by 2012. Sanchez-Benedito, however, told us that meeting the development assistance goal will be difficult given the Spanish budget crisis. In his opinion, Spanish plans to open embassies in Uganda and the Great Lakes region are unlikely to happen.

//INTERIOR AND SECURITY//

¶7. (C) Analysts at FRIDE see GOS African policy as being oriented towards realpolitik, and GOS officials admit that illegal immigration, narcotrafficking, organized crime, and terrorism continue to be the underlying reasons behind their increased interest in Africa. The GOS remains disturbed about the potential for human trafficking networks to link up with terrorists and the ways in which illegal activities might connect, such as a terrorist buying forged documents from a human trafficker. Thus far, Spain has not found evidence to directly link illegal immigration trafficking networks with terrorism, according to Miguel Garcia-Herraiz, Deputy Director General for International Affairs and Terrorism at the MFA. In fact, he said immigrants who have been arrested in Spain for terrorism links in recent years have all been here legally. Spanish officials are very concerned about the status of Al Qaida in the Lands of the Islamic Mahgreb (AQIM) in North and West Africa. Juan Andres Villalgordo, Senior Adviser for European Affairs in

MADRID 00000864 003.2 OF 004

the Secretariat of State for Security at the Ministry of Interior, said one of their main worries is that one of the weaker governments in the region (such as that of Mauritania) could fall and be replaced by a radical Islamist government that supports AQIM. Manuel Gomez-Acebo, Deputy Director General for North Africa at the MFA, also sees Mauritania--which the Spanish group with North Africa--as the potential weak link in the region, and told visiting INR analysts in early July that Spain and the US need to follow it more closely and ensure that there are not any problems. Juan Andres Villalgordo emphasized that Spain is also is working to convince the EU of the dangers of AQIM.

¶8. (C) Both Garcia-Herraiz and Villalgordo note that the MOI--and particularly Minister Rubalcaba and MOI number two Camacho--has become more aggressive in pushing its international presence, particularly in North Africa but also in West Africa. Villalgordo belongs to the Directorate General of International Relations, which he said was created in 2006 partly to help the MOI deal better with African issues. He cited Cape Verde, Mali, and Mauritania as being among the countries with which MOI has boosted cooperation in recent years, and noted that the Spanish strategy includes cooperation projects, institution building, joint patrols, bilateral accords, and increased ministerial visits. MOI engagement with African countries includes discussion on all three of the MOI's overriding concerns (illegal immigration, organized crime (including narcotrafficking), and terrorism) related to the subcontinent, even when any one of these topics is not explicitly on the agenda. Spain's security efforts in the region also have included 200,000 euros to fund the African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), established by the African Union in Algeria in 2004. In April, the ACSRT and GOS collaborated on a three-day analytic seminar on CT in the North Africa region. According to Garcia-Herraiz, the event included police representatives from Italy, Belgium, and Spain, as well as experts from European countries and African Union members Algeria, Egypt, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Tunisia.

//OPPORTUNITIES ON THE HORIZON//

¶9. (C) With Africa occupying a more prominent space in Spanish foreign policy, Madrid appears likely to include a focus on the subcontinent as part of its upcoming EU presidency in 2010, which could present opportunities for the US as well. Villalgordo said Spain also puts a high premium on collaboration with other EU member states and among the EU as a whole, because no single EU country can accomplish lasting gains in Africa working alone. He advocates that Spain use its January-June 2010 EU presidency partly to focus the EU, in conjunction with the U.S., to do more in Africa and other third countries, including both those touching EU frontiers and other key countries that affect EU security concerns. Moreover, according to Villalgordo, Spain believes that the security dimension of the EU in general should be amplified to become more transatlantic in nature, and he and others are exploring ways of trying to create a more natural space for cooperation between the US and EU.

¶10. (C) Recent discussions suggest other avenues for collaboration as well. Garcia-Herraiz, for example, expressed interest in US efforts on prison reform and radicalization and said Madrid has taken some steps toward working on prison reform with African countries--efforts that largely seem limited to North Africa, but which potentially could be expanded. He noted that Spain had a long history of trying to combat prison radicalization among its Basque terrorist prisoners, with both successes and failures. The MOI's Director General for penal institutions has traveled to Morocco to discuss the issue, and the MFA is encouraging the Justice Ministry to work with prosecutors in North African

MADRID 00000864 004.2 OF 004

countries on issues like rule of law and promotion of the judiciary. Spanish officials also appear interested in more information about US efforts. Garcia-Herraiz, for example, said that the GOS is aware of both the US AFRICOM and Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership initiatives, but does not have a good understanding of the links between the two; he sought more information from visiting INR analysts in early July.

¶11. (SBU) FRIDE researchers assert that Spain has the potential to make real contributions in Africa on issues like democratization, transparency, and gender equality. They say that many in North Africa look enthusiastically to the Spanish democratic transition of the 1970s as a model for their own societies; when former President Felipe Gonzalez visits Morocco, for example, people flock to hear him speak. Spain, however, has not capitalized on that image. In fact, they say that the MFA in recent years shut down its democratization unit and opened a radicalization one instead.

Spain also could make real strides on gender issues, according to the FRIDE analysts. They note First Vice President Fernandez de la Vega's interest on this front; the appointment in April of Spaniard Ines Alberdi to head the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); and the "Women for a Better World" network between Spain and Africa, which next year will hold its fourth annual conference in Namibia. As in other areas, however, they say Madrid has done a far better job of making declarations than of committing actual programming.

//COMMENT//

¶12. (C) With its realpolitik focus, we see Spain continuing to increase its commitment to Africa, an assessment shared by FRIDE analysts and our contacts in the MFA. Madrid's efforts to boost development aid to Africa and other regions is particularly noteworthy, especially if Spain maintains its commitment despite current economic woes. We remain convinced that there are good opportunities for, at the very least, behind-the-scenes collaboration with Spain, particularly in a continent where there is relatively little historical baggage to taint US-Spanish cooperation. Aguirre